

AMENDMENTS TO THE ABSTRACT

Please delete the Abstract and insert thereof the following Abstract:

In a hierarchy of layered applications and corresponding protocols, a port and protocol sharing method is disclosed. Traffic is received over a single shared logical port, and the traffic is routed to an interlayer communications process disposed between two layers in the hierarchy. A discrimination algorithm is applied to select a particular application/protocol layer in a higher one of the two layers to which the traffic is to be routed. The traffic is routed to the selected particular application/protocol layer. An additional application/protocol layer is added to the hierarchy. The discrimination algorithm is replaced with another discrimination algorithm program to consider the additional application/protocol layer during the selection process. The additional application/protocol layer is considered in the selecting step. When selected, the traffic is routed to the additional application/protocol layer. The adding and replacing steps are performed without decoupling or disabling other applications and protocols in the hierarchy.